

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 0850

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS/ MASS DA

SUBJ: KEY PARLIAMENTARIAN CONFIDENT OF DANISH

PURCHASE OF F-16

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ARNE CHRISTIANSEN, CHAIRMAN OF THE FOLKETING (PARLIAMENT) DEFENSE COMMITTEE, EXPRESSED TO POLCOUNS MAR 21 HIS CONFIDENCE THAT THE CONSORTIUM WOULD HOLD TOGETHER AND BUY THE F-16. CHRISTIANSEN, WHO IS A LIBERAL PARTY MEMBER, SAID HE HAS BEEN WORKING CLOSELY WITH DEFENSE MINISTER ORLA MOELLER, A SOCIAL DEMOCRAT, ON PARLIAMENTARY TACTICS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CENTRAL QUESTION THEY ARE ADDRESSING IS THE
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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIGHTER PLANE PURCHASE AND

THE FOUR YEAR (1973-77) DANISH DEFENSE AGREEMENT. ALTHOUGH THE DEADLINE FOR REACHING A NEW AGREEMENT IS STILL IN THE FUTURE, CHRISTIANSEN SAID THAT IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE DANISH DEFENSE EFFORT IF IT WERE EXTENDED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. SINCE A DECISION ON THE FIGHTER PLANE PURCHASE APPEARS IMMINENT, ITS PROPONENTS HAVE TENTATIVELY CONCLUDED THAT IT SHOULD BE MADE MORE OR LESS IN PARALLEL WITH A DECISION EXTENDING THE DEFENSE AGREEMENT. THEY BASE THIS JUDGMENT ON THE FACT THAT (A) THE FIGHTER PLANES ARE NOT TO BE DELIVERED UNTIL THE EXPIRATION OF THE PRESENT AGREEMENT; (B) MUCH OR MOST OF THE EXPENDITURE WILL OCCUR AFTER THE AGREEMENT EXPIRES IN EARLY 1977; AND (C) THE UNCERTAIN SUPPORT OF THE RADICAL PARTY (ONE OF THE FOUR PARTIES TO THE DEFENSE AGREEMENT) FOR EITHER THE PLANE PURCHASE OR THE EXTENSION AT PRESENT FUNDING LEVELS OF THE AGREEMENT ITSELF.

3. CHRISTIANSEN SAID THAT ACCORDING TO HIS PARLIAMENTARY SOUNDINGS THE VOTES FOR BOTH THE PLANE PURCHASE AND THE CONTINUATION, AT PRESENT FUNDING LEVELS, OF THE DEFENSE AGREEMENT ARE AVAILABLE. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND THE LIBERALS ARE NOW CONSIDERING THE ADVISABILITY OF FORCING THE RADICALS TO TAKE AN EARLY STAND ON THESE RELATED ISSUES. EVEN IF THE RADICALS, HOWEVER RELUCTANTLY, WENT ALONG ON BOTH ISSUES, IT MIGHT BE PRUDENT TO ENLARGE THE PRESENT AGREEMENT SO AS TO INCLUDE OTHER PARTIES LIKE THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY AND THE CENTER DEMOCRATS. CHRISTIANSEN SAID HE BELIEVES THAT MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF THE PARLIAMENTARIANS IN MOGENS GLISTRUP'S PROGRESS PARTY WOULD ALSO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT ON THESE ISSUES. (THEIR LACK OF DEPENDABILITY, HOWEVER, MAKES THE LEADERS OF THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES HESITATE TO ENTER INTO SUCH A LONG-TERM ARRANGEMENT WITH THE GLISTRUPITES.)

4. THE OTHER TACTICAL UNCERTAINTY IS WHETHER TO SEEK PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL BEFORE RPT BEFORE DEFENSE

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MINISTER MOLLER COMMITS DENMARK TO THE F-16 OR WHETHER A COMMITMENT IN PRINCIPLE SHOULD BE MADE, SUBJECT TO PARLIAMENTARY RATIFICATION. CHRISTIANSEN SAID THAT AT THE MOMENT THE FORMER ALTERNATIVE WAS FAVORED.

5. FINALLY, HE PREDICTED FINAL DANISH RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUE BEFORE MAY 15.

6. COMMENT: CHRISTIANSEN, AS WELL AS OTHER POLITICAL
PROPONENTS OF THE F-16, CONTINUE TO EXPRESS
THEIR OPTIMISM AND TEND TO BRUSH ASIDE POSSIBLE LABOR
UNION OBJECTIONS AS WELL AS THE POSSIBILITY OF
EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION TO THE PURCHASE.
HE APPEARED TO BE GENERALLY INFORMED ABOUT THE CON-
TINUING BELGIAN-DUTCH MEETINGS AS WELL AS THE RE-
EXAMINATION OF THE MIRAGE OFFER AND BELIEVED THE
DUTCH WOULD BE ABLE TO RESIST BELGIAN PRESSURES IN
BEHALF OF THE FRENCH. LIKE MANY OTHERS HERE
INVOLVED IN THE FIGHTER REPLACEMENT ISSUE, CHRISTIANSEN
NO LONGER REGARDS THE VIGGEN AS A SERIOUS COMPETITOR.
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